

SUMMER BIRDS OF THE SOUTHERN EDGE OF  
WESTERN ONTARIO.

W. E. SAUNDERS.

On June 6, 1909, Mr. J. S. Wallace, of Toronto, began with me a walk of exploration along the southern edge of Western Ontario. We left Amherstburg, at the southwestern corner of the province, at day break, and on the 10th, the walk ended at Blenheim about fifty miles further east. The object of the trip was to ascertain whether certain southern forms which breed in moderate numbers on Point Pelee, extended through the country near by.

The species sought were, the Chat, Cardinal, Carolina Wren, and Bewick's Wren. We were successful in finding the first three, and although their numbers were small, yet the distribution was wide enough to convince us that the Chat and the Carolina Wren at least were regular breeders through a considerable portion of the territory covered. In addition to these, we found the Dickcissel near the east end of the journey where two males were in full song in one field, but we failed to find any trace whatever of the Lark or the Henslow's Sparrows, both of which were expected.

The taking of the first specimens of the Acadian Flycatcher for Canada fully counterbalanced any disappointment we may have felt at missing the species mentioned and brought the trip to a very successful close.

A walking trip has certain advantages in the way of freedom of movement over any other method of locomotion that may be adopted, but of course progress is slow. One should not exceed 8 or 10 miles of woods and fields in the course of a day and any additional distance had to be covered on road or railroad track, but in the nesting season when the birds are in full song, one's ears enable him to cover the ground within ear shot with a fair degree of thoroughness, even though he may keep walking all the time. After leaving the southwest corner of the peninsula, we had proceeded only three or four miles before we heard a Carolina Wren;

this bird had already been noticed in summer at two or three other localities in Ontario in other years, and one was heard singing near London on June 5, 1909, and may possibly be nesting there. Another of this species was heard about three miles from the east base of Point Pelee, which strengthens the conviction that they are to be found more commonly near the base of the Point than elsewhere on the mainland.

At six miles southeast of Amherstburg we located another Chat, in fact we heard two at once, but the note of the second one was so peculiar that it necessitated special investigation to determine the author. The first one was accompanied by its mate and they were doubtless nesting in the scrub at that point. These birds are rather rare on Point Pelee and we were not very confident of finding them on the mainland, but at Renwick, about forty miles farther east another one was noted in a somewhat similar location, where it was doubtless nesting.

Another note of interest was the discovery of a breeding ground of the Piping Plover. About six or eight pairs of these birds were scattered along the lake shore beside the marsh near the mouth of the big creek a few miles from the Detroit River. One nest was found with four nearly hatched eggs and the other birds were manifestly concerned at our presence. Favorable nesting grounds for these birds are not to be found very often. The others reported so far for the north shore of Lake Erie are Point Pelee, the Rond Eau sand bar and the Long Point. It is to be doubted if there are more than two or three other localities at which these birds are found in the nesting season, while on Lake Ontario the Toronto island is the only point that I know of where the species nests.

The Savannah Sparrow which is an abundant bird at London was rare throughout all the territory covered and was everywhere outnumbered by the Grasshopper Sparrow of which we recorded as many as 10 in one day.

The Rough-winged Swallow was noted in two places, single birds only, the other being doubtless on the nest. As

this bird requires the face of a sand bank beside the water for nesting, it was quite a surprise to find even two, as the country is almost exclusively clay. A colony of bank swallows was found near Blenheim in a pit, but no Rough-wings could be found among them. The Short-billed Marsh Wren was noticed at only one point where a male was singing. It was immediately beneath an Eagles' nest, which we did not care to disturb and therefore did not spend much time with the wren as the eagle was very much concerned at our presence near its young, which could be seen when one was not too close to the nest. The Cardinal was expected perhaps more confidently than any other of the birds sought owing to its comparative abundance on Point Pelee, but it was not until the last day within two miles of Ridgetown that one was heard whistling from a treetop by the road-side.

The Dickeissel was formerly common throughout Western Ontario at almost every point that I had the opportunity of visiting, but during the last ten years they have vanished almost completely, and no trip had disclosed any of them in the last five years. One or two years ago Dr. Walker reported that he believed he had found a pair near Ridgetown, but I was unable to visit the locality to confirm the record. It was therefore a great satisfaction to find two males singing in a field near Blenheim, and as their song is so easily recognized and has such good carrying power, it seems as though they must be very rare indeed through the territory travelled. It may be that we are about to see them become more common again as is the custom with very many of our birds. In fact I have been surprised in recent years to see what a large number of the less common birds show great differences in their numbers from year to year.

An interesting Black Tern was seen near the west end of our walk. It was one which had carried over the young plumage to the present year and as nearly as we could tell, the colors were as usual, but the bird was flying around with a lot of normal plumaged adults, who were evidently concerned at our near approach and were doubtless nesting.

The Green Heron is found rather commonly in many parts of Western Ontario and appears to be spreading, but on this walk, we saw only three and those all on the first day. It is true that during that day we passed through more wet lands than in the latter part of the trip, but we were constantly near a good deal of suitable ground where these birds were not seen.

Tree Swallows were also common on the first day, but after that not one was observed. These birds have become practically extinct in the London district within ten years, while in the more distant past they were quite common, nesting in fair numbers even in the business parts of the city of London, but while our Martins have apparently held their own, the Tree Swallows have vanished.

When passing through a piece of woods about forty miles east of the Detroit River, I saw a Hummingbird doing the Pendulum Play. After two or three oscillations in front of a shrub he flew through it and chased out his mate, she lit very close by and he immediately began again, swung ten times and then vanished.

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## FIVE NOTES FROM THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY.

ALTHEA R. SHERMAN.

KING RAIL, *Rallus elegans*. The conduct of one of this species, that visited our yard during the forenoon of April 15th, was out of the ordinary. The ground everywhere had been made very muddy by a heavy rain on the previous day. At 7:45 o'clock the King Rail was first seen walking in the middle of the street. Having traveled to the northern limit of the yard, it turned and came under the fence into the enclosure; leisurely examining the ground, it passed within six feet of the house and walked out through the front gate, that chanced to stand open. In a similar manner it spent the next four hours, cover-